Subject: [ENGL-ALL] BookLab’s Winter Newsletter
From: BookLab at UMD English <mgk@UMD.EDU>
To: ENGL-ALL@listserv.umd.edu
Date Sent: Tuesday, February 5, 2019 11:49:13 AM GMT-05:00
Date Received: Tuesday, February 5, 2019 12:29:25 PM GMT-05:00

Winter 2019 Newsletter

Yes it’s me, I myself, 
what I turned out to be

—ÁLVARO DE DOMÍNGUEZ
PEQUEÑO DESBU
A Midwinter's Missive

BookLab has been busy making friends. Last semester we hosted class visits—several 301s, 601, other courses—ran two letterpress workshops and two community prints in support of events like #BelieveWomen and the campus-wide FrankenRead. We also celebrated some of the first student work to emerge directly from BookLab: Highlights include the stunning volume pictured above, A Modern Gift Book by first-year doctoral student C. M. Coppage for Kari Kraus's course. The book was printed in house with letterpress (pictured) and offset (using Adobe InDesign software), and hand-bound with a Coptic binding (see inset). Coppage comments, “The book is cherished for a short time and then given away, welcoming the wear and tear of changing hands.”

New in BookLab, aside from the ever-growing collections on our shelves (see some highlights at the end of this newsletter), is a 3D printer! This device bookends (sorry) the Gutenberg-style screw press we have for printing with movable type, allowing students to see—and utilize—five and a half centuries of printing technology in the same physical space. We also look forward to fabricating our own type and ornaments with the 3D printer (an early experiment in this regard is pictured above). Moreover, in addition to our workshops on letterpress, you can also, later this semester, look forward to workshops on 3D printing and papermaking. In the meantime, if you would like to try a print yourself, or just see the process in action, feel free to stop by BookLab during our Spring open hours (see sidebar). And you can peruse these links for recognition BookLab has received from ARHU and Maryland Today.

Finally, we are very excited announce our first major public programming later this month, in cooperation with the Center for Literary and Comparative Studies, Comparative Literature, and external sponsors including the Pyramid Atlantic Art Center in nearby Hyattsville: Whitney Trettien (Assistant Professor of English at Penn) and Russell Maret (an independent fine press printer and typographer) will be joining us for a half-day symposium entitled Unnam’d Forms: Perspectives on the Post-Digital Book. More details follow just below.

We’re proud to be part of this department’s efforts to reach out beyond Tawes. Follow us on Instagram and Twitter, and we look forward to seeing you any time our door is open. We have a couch, a hot pot for tea or cocoa on a cold day, many books of interest, and many bookish things old and new.

Unnam’d Forms: Perspectives on the Post-Digital Book, with Russell Maret and Whitney Trettien

Tuesday, February 26, 2019;
1:30pm – 5:30pm
(Tawes 2115 and 3248)

This half-day symposium is organized around
what the poet and printer William Blake once called "unnam'd forms," his term for the polymorphic material configurations of the codex. Rather than speculating about the future of the book, we have invited each speaker to address its post-digital present, by which we mean the reality that books exist now (and indeed, are thriving) in a densely layered digital landscape and are themselves the products of digital design and fabrication techniques. Books are thus “post-digital” in the sense that they have emerged from the other side of the technology’s disruption with their material forms intact, but also irrevocably changed. The symposium will begin with a less formal talk and demonstration from each of our invitees in BookLab (Tawes 3248), and then move to Tawes 2115 for their papers and a wrap-up panel with members of the University of Maryland and College Park book arts community.

Upcoming Events
(On Campus and Beyond)

Please note: some events require pre-registration.

- **Woven Words: Decoding the Silk Book** at The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, MD (February 6, 2019–April 28, 2019)
- **COLLABorate Friday** in the Michelle Smith Collaboratory for Visual Culture (Art-Sociology 4213), University of Maryland (Friday, February 8, 12:00pm–4:00pm; ongoing most Fridays)
- **Letterpress Poster Workshop** at Typecase Industries, Washington DC NW (Sunday, February 10, 2019 from 11:00am–3:00pm)
- **Free Folger Friday: The Country Gentleman** at the Folger Theatre, Washington DC SE (Friday, March 1, 2019 at 6:00pm)
- **Introduction to Western Papermaking** at Pyramid Atlantic, Hyattsville, MD (Saturday, March 2, from 10:00am–4:00pm)
- **Full Bleed: A Decade of Photobooks and Photo Zines by Women** at the National Museum for Women in the Arts (ongoing through March 2019)

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Winter Book Picks

Each issue, we’re choosing our favorite books from the BookLab library to be displayed on our bookshelves. Drop by and visit us if you’re interested in learning more about our book picks.

Click each book cover for a link to its entry in our LibraryThing catalog

Britt’s Pick: A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel by Tom Phillips

What is “a humument”? you might ask. It is “A Human Document” with “an Doc” scratched out and the vestigial word parts conjoined to form a new word. But what is a “humument”? A monument, perhaps, to the human gifts of creative writing, the visual arts, the practice of remixing, and of reading (broadly defined) and interpretation. A Humument is a colorful feast for the imagination in codex form. Its intricate visual design requires you to slow down and linger over each page in order to appreciate it (or even just to read it). Tom Phillips has taken a “forgotten Victorian novel found by chance,” and made a work of art of each page, leaving just a few of the original words visible, which, if read from left to right and top to bottom, as is the English language custom, form a new story. “I plundered, mined, and undermined its text to make it yield the ghosts of other possible stories, scenes, poems, erotic incidents and surrealist catastrophes which seemed to lurk within its wall of words,” writes the author-artist. Come compare BookLab’s collection of editions one and three of six.

Matt’s Pick: Barabajan Poems 1492-1992 by Kamau Brathwaite

Born in Barbados in 1930, (Edward) Kamau Brathwaite already had a bibliography of poetry, criticism, and historiography that ran to nearly 90 pages by the time he got his first Macintosh computer in the late 1980s. But he immediately absorbed the Mac into his own personal mythos and poetics, naming it Sycorax for the mother of Caliban and using its fonts and layout tools to compose and print nearly all of his poetry thereafter. The results are striking: pages filled with eruptions of fonts and clip art, the “jaggies” of the original digital typography preserved in editions from Oxford, Wesleyan, New Directions, and other major presses. But Brathwaite’s idiosyncratic style and perfectionism also made it challenging for commercial presses to reproduce the work faithfully: even the size of the page, as it would have come curling out of the StyleWriter
Mal's Pick: Woman's World: A Novel by Graham Rawle

Graham Rawle’s Woman’s World tells the story of the “ideal” mid-century woman with innovative artistry and a wholly unexpected plot twist. Norma Fontaine isn’t exactly who you think she is... While I’m drawn to Rawle’s eccentric storytelling, it was his use of form which piqued my interest in Woman’s World. Composed of fragments from mid-century women’s magazines, the novel’s juxtaposition of font styles, word size, and images makes Rawle’s finished project feel more like an artists’ book than a mass-produced object. Rawle notes that the novel took more than five years to assemble with over 40,000 individual fragments of text, and his efforts show throughout the nearly five-hundred pages of Woman’s World. The engaging plot, combined with Rawle’s artistic efforts, make this novel an interesting exploration of the media forms present in contemporary literature. As someone who loves books with a little extra “oomph” added to the pages, Rawle’s work fits the bill by keeping the reader entertained with an engaging story of identity and a beautiful work of collaged images.


The first publication released by MIT’s Center for Art, Science, and Technology (CAST), Experience is a wide-ranging exploration of sensory experience across time and place, species and scales. What makes this edited collection so relevant to BookLab is that it aesthetically engages the senses as well as analyzes them. As Leila Kinney notes in her foreword, “Experience is not a conventional academic book,” but rather one that aims to “rethink the familiar form of the codex.” It accomplishes this by augmenting and modifying the component parts of the book: the cover is made from thermochromic ink concealing text and images revealed by the warmth of the reader’s hands; the endpapers contain aroma pigments synthesized from human pheromones; the fore-edges are painted in a beautiful gradient design visible when the pages are fanned; and the center of the book harbors strand-like bookmarks reminiscent of a spider’s web. We hope you’ll stop by BookLab to experience Experience.

Bookish Links
1. **Studying Early Printed Books, 1450–1800: A Practical Guide**: Written by Sarah Werner, a Washington D.C. area book historian, Shakespearean, and digital media scholar, this new volume explores the printing process of early books and their impact on reading today. Werner presents "the connections between the material form of a book (what it looks like and how it was made), how a book conveys its meaning and how it is used by readers." Stay tuned for Dr. Werner's book launch in BookLab! (image courtesy of Wiley)

2. **For the First Time in More Than 20 Years, Copyrighted Works Will Enter the Public Domain**: All works published in the United States in 1923 are now part of the public domain, making it the perfect time to plan for classroom activities and personal endeavors. Use the newly released works by Toomer or Cather, or be on the lookout for the additional literary, visual, and aural works released this year. (image courtesy of TechCrunch)
3. **Pressing On: The Letterpress Film**: “The modern world was born on a printing press. Once essential to communication, the 500-year-old process is now in danger of being lost as its caretakers age. From self-proclaimed basement hoarders to the famed Hatch Show Print, *Pressing On: The Letterpress Film* explores the question: why has letterpress survived in a digital age?” (image courtesy of Bayonet Media)